(b) There have been some complaints in this regard and corrective action has been taken. Emphasis is being given on courtesy, promptness and efficiency.

(c) Air India has, *inter-alia*, taken following major initiatives to improve its functioning to make it competitive :—(i) Reservation and other information on the internets, (ii) Flat beds/slumberettes and DVDs in the first and executive class of all B-747-400 aircraft, (iii) Frequent Flyer Programme, Maharaja Club, Leading Edge Club programmes, (iv) Food festivals, up gradation of meals.

(d) and (e) Emphasis has been given on the training of the employees particularly the staff at booking offices and airports, by having special customer care programmes conducted by an outside agency, in order to improve the services offered to passengers.

Revision in air and cargo fares

4026. DR. AKHILESH DAS : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Indian Airlines, Air India and other private air operators like the Jet Airways have lately hiked the air fares and cargo fares;

(b) if so, to what extent indicating the revised and the previous fares; and

(c) the reasons for such a hike ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Indian Airlines, Jet Airways and Air Sahara have increased their Rupee fares for passengers on domestic sectors by 15% *w.e.f.* 26-3-2003. On international sector, Indian Airlines has increased its fares from India to South-East Asia by 7—18%, on select routes, *w.e.f.* 5-4-2003 and Air India has increased its international passenger fares by 5% from India to USA, Canada, Europe, Middle East, South East Asia, Japan, Korea and Australia.

Indian Airlines and Jet Airways have not effected any increase in their cargo tariffs since the beginning of the year 2003, whereas Air Sahara has increased it by 7—10% from January. 2003 onwards. Air India has increased the rates for perishable cargo from Mumbai to the Gulf by Rs. 2/- per KG. for three months and to London from Rs. 65,000/- per container to Rs. 77,000/- per container.

(c) Domestic airlines have effected increase in air fares in order to offset the increase in the cost of Aviation Turbine Fuel and other operating costs. Air India has followed the general fare increase effected by the International Air Transport Association (IATA). The cargo rates of Air India traditionally go up

in the months of April, May and June every year due to the Mango season and come down again in July.

Free tickets to artisan

†4027. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) the details of free tickets provided to the artists, dance groups and the performers of other arts by Air India and Indian Airlines separately every year during 1999, 2000 and 2001 in commercial interests together with the dates of their Journey as well as the details of their destinations and the fares in each case; and

(b) the number of such other free tickets given in addition to this and the total expense incurred on that?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK) : (a) and (b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Making air travel safer

4028. SHRI DWIJENDRA NATH SHARMAH : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state the details of the steps being taken by Government for making air travel safer in different parts of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK) : For safety of passengers and aircraft, the steps taken are safety audit of operators, periodic spot checks, airworthiness control on ageing aircraft, installation of Minimum Safe Altitude Warning System, installation of Monopulse Secondary Surveillance Radars, installation of Ground Proximity Warning System, installation of Airborne Collision Avoidance System, strict compliance with airworthiness standards and maintenance infrastructure in accordance with Rules and Regulations in force from time to time. The other steps taken are internal audits by operators themselves, surveillance by Flight Inspectors, special operating precautions in poor weather conditions and dissemination of safety information through seminars and workshops.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.